

**In the Claims:**

Please cancel claims 13-18.

Please add the following new claims.

19. A method for assigning a telephone number to a communications line comprising the steps of:

A) assigning a unique equipment identifier to the communications line;

B) associating the unique equipment identifier with a telecommunications network such that an outgoing call may be originated from the communications line that has the unique equipment identifier; and

C) omitting association of a telephone number with the unique equipment identifier to inhibit incoming calls to the communications line by lack of a telephone number being associated therewith.

20. The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of:

D) associating a currently assigned telephone number with the communications line for billing.

21. The method of claim 20 further comprising the step of:

E) associating a currently assigned telephone number with the communications line for maintenance on the communications line.

22. The method of claim 21 further comprising the step of:

F) associating a currently assigned telephone number with the communications line for automatic number identification.

23. The method of claim 22 further comprising the step of:

G) associating a currently assigned telephone number with the communications line for purposes other than receiving an incoming telephone call.

24. The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of:

H) associating a currently assigned telephone number with the communications line for calling number identification.

25. The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of:

D) temporarily assigning an unassigned telephone number to the communications line in response to a request for a temporary telephone number

26. The method of claim 25 wherein the request for a temporary telephone number is initiated by a telephone call.

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